

UNION COUNTY DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What deer management program is Westfield considering? Westfield is considering participation in Union County's Deer Management Program this winter which uses crossbow archery to cull the deer population. Crossbow archery is a very safe way to address deer overcrowding. The areas under consideration for this program include Brightwood Park and the wooded areas around the Westfield Conservation Center.

What is the purpose of the Union County deer management program? The purpose of the deer management program is to safely address the deer overpopulation and reduce it to a healthier, more sustainable level and reduce the significant health and safety issues that deer overpopulation causes.

Why is a deer management program necessary? Deer overcrowding is a major problem in Union County and Westfield. If this problem is not addressed, it will continue to get worse since the deer population doubles every two years. Deer overpopulation causes significant health and safety issues for Westfield residents including:

- 1) **Pedestrian and Vehicular Safety:** Deer overpopulation leads to too many deer on our streets as they forage for food which is a major safety issue. Since Jan. 2018, there have been approximately 100 accidents in which deer have been struck by cars including 49 deer fatalities. Additionally, deer roaming around have gotten stuck in storm drains, batting cages in town parks and fences which can cause injuries to the deer and require town resources to address.
- 2) **Lyme Disease Exposure:** A typical adult deer is estimated to carry 100+ Lyme disease carrying ticks, which they drop as they move around.
- 3) **Landscape destruction:** Deer herds oftentimes congregate on residential properties, eating plants and shrubs and depositing excrement. They also cross roads in packs which contributes to traffic congestion and contributes to pedestrian and vehicular safety issues.

What is the cost to Westfield to participate in the pilot winter archery season? There will be no cost to the Town of Westfield. All costs for feed corn and deer butchering will be paid by Union County. All hunting permits and equipment costs will be paid by the archers.

What are the pertinent details of the Union County Deer Management Program?

- 1) **Timing:** It takes place between Jan. 1-Feb. 14 and occurs typically two mornings or afternoons a week between Monday-Friday.
- 2) **Who are the Archers:** The archers for the deer management program are volunteers, qualified for accuracy in the use of crossbows and vetted for criminal as well as fish and game violations. The archers will follow all Union County and State of New Jersey Fish and Wildlife regulations, guidelines and bag limits. It's highly likely that the archers will be Westfield residents.
- 3) **How does the archery process work?** The archers will use portable tree stands, at a minimum height of 12 feet, to ensure any crossbow arrows fired will burrow safely into the ground. All activity will take place over baited areas from elevated tree stands. These areas will be chosen to provide a safe area for deer management and to avoid human interaction and conflict. The archers in the Union County program will operate typically 300 feet or further away from any residential property, even though the State law only requires 150 feet.
- 4) **Will residents see or hear anything?** No. The program is designed to be invisible to residents. The archers are situated 300 feet or more away from residential properties, crossbows are

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quiet, the culled deer are carried out on sleds and nothing is left behind after the archers finish every day.

What happens to the harvested deer? The harvested deer may be kept by the hunters for personal consumption or donated for distribution through the Community Food Bank. Union County has provided thousands of meals as a result of the Union County Deer Management Program.

Does Union County utilize non-lethal methods of deer management? No. Deer management is only accomplished through a proven archery or shotgun programs. Other non-lethal methods of deer management are either ineffective or prohibitively expensive. For example, Staten Island, NY recently instituted a deer vasectomy program at a cost of \$4.1 million and unfortunately, has seen a dramatic increase in deer/vehicle collisions during the non-lethal vasectomy program. As a result, Staten Island is now considering using archery for its deer management program. Additionally, contraceptive efforts have proven very costly and highly ineffective on a free ranging deer population. Trap and transfer methods are also not options as there are no host communities that will accept deer.

What other Union County municipalities are participating in the 2019/20 Union County Deer Management Program? Municipalities that are part of the Union County Deer Management Program include: Berkeley Heights, Clark, Cranford, Hillside, Kenilworth, Linden, Mountainside, New Providence, Scotch Plains, Springfield, Summit, Union, and Union County's Lenape Park on the border of Westfield.

What is the smallest area of land in which the County has implemented this program? Hunters for Union County have been involved with other counties' programs within properties of similar size to the area adjacent to Grandview, although Union County's program has not yet operated deer management in a similarly sized parcel. For this reason, the Town and the County have proposed that the area near Grandview, which is approximately nine acres in size, be deferred in this pilot year to instead focus Westfield's initial efforts in the larger areas of Brightwood Park and the Conservation Center.

What quantity of deer would be reasonably expected to be culled in Westfield's first year in the program? The County's expectation is that approximately 15-25 deer can be culled between the Conservation Center and Brightwood Park in the initial year of program participation.

What type of deer are being culled? The County program emphasizes to all participants that this is not a recreation or trophy hunting program. The priority for all participating hunters is to target mature does as the most effective means to cull the herd, as their resulting fawns can triple the herd population in about a year. In addition, for every buck that is culled, the program requires at least two antlerless deer to be culled as well; the average has actually been three for every buck.

How are the hunters for the program vetted and selected by the County? The County has many qualified participants for their program. In addition to thorough background checks for both criminal and Fish & Game violations, prospective participants must pass a skills-based assessment and be certified by hitting a three-inch target from 20 yards away. Any participant not following the program's policies, including those pursuing a recreational/trophy hunting priority, are promptly removed (a very rare occurrence). Residents should know that participants will include Westfield residents, and a

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Westfield resident participant will be named local Captain to serve as the eyes and ears of the program to ensure its full compliance.

What happens when a deer is shot with an arrow? The primary goal of the trained and vetted hunters who participate in the Deer Management Program is to humanely put the deer down, which is achieved both by mandated proximity and taking targeted aim at key areas on the deer that will minimize its suffering.

The County cross bow program has felled more than 100 deer this season to date, and not one has run into a residential yard or public street after being struck. This is attributed to the strict rules imposed on the hunters and the substantial participant vetting that occurs.

What do the archers do if the deer run off after being struck? The hunters are trained and instructed to track a stricken deer to completion and ensure it is properly removed. If a deer were to end up on a residential property (which has not yet occurred in the County's experience), the Police Department, in conjunction with the County's hunter, would seek permission from the homeowner to enter the property and remove the animal.

How are arrows accounted for to ensure none are left behind? Hunters in the County program are instructed not to leave any arrows behind. In addition, most crossbow hunters use lighted arrows, which make it easier for them to be located and are typically costly for the owner to lose.

What are the notification procedures to nearby residents? Each residence bordering the hunting area would be notified in advance of the program's details. Signage will also be placed in the program areas to notify visitors of the date range and other details of the program.

How often can residents expect hunters to be culling deer during the program's duration? Most hunters in the program have full time jobs and participate in the County program as their free time permits. While there is no set schedule, residents can expect hunters to participate approximately one to two afternoons per week. The proposal is for one location at the Conservation Center, and two to three locations in Brightwood Park.